reader text extracted *from*

The World Turned Upside Down, public reading in Yppenplatz, Vienna on July 2026.

This reading, created in collaboration with Momoko Berthold, Simone Molinari, Maria Vittoria Franzini and Frederike Gordillo, brought together nursery rhymes, philosophical texts and extracts from children's books in six different languages.

You can access the world not only through its entrance door, but through a window as well. This is what children literature does: language gets stirred, sense bumps against itself, up goes down and down goes up.

Reading these stories and rhymes together, out loud, is to collectively indulge in the whimsical; it is an exercise for heart and mind both; it is to overturn the given order of things, and a reminder that “the world is that it is something that we make, and could just as easily make differently”.

Thank you once again to Alice for organising Umarmungenerlaubtzone and for the invitation.

The Joker [1]

Don't be scandalized. Being scandalized makes you emotionally dependent on the tyranny. It erodes your capacity to think beyond the madness. It reduces your opposition to a determinate negation of the tyrant. It will take over your life. It will ruin your mind. This is a long term game.

Watch and do what there is to do. (...) Don't react. Pre-enact. Absolutely not do absolutely. Condone absurdity and absurdly reject. *Fascism is a political carnival, its Surrealism is the new social contract. The institutions, the law, the so-called "real" person, these characters we play in bourgeois theaters, the respectable civilians disappear in favor of their cruel mirror images. A call to wait and see becomes ideological deflection. Outrage becomes traumatic attachment. The private persona becomes derailment. The trauma is real. Maybe it is time to stop pretending that some "good" institution was to come and save you. Batman is dead. It's on you to become the Joker. What makes Batman a hero and the Joker a villain is exactly their relation to representation, and to trauma. Both suffer tragic and traumatic accidents, both find a re-arrangement of their symbolic existence as a strategy for survival. But in fact they differ massively: one remains centered on an institutional reality of "the law", and "the real person",* really existent, legitimate, *while the other embraces trauma absolutely, giving up on the designated object, dissolving into mere representation,* dispersed, errant. *The first one, insisting on the reality of experience and presence to himself, is Batman. The one giving up on the real person is Joker. Batman somehow believes that the law designates a potentially real situation in the world that is to be maintained,*

[1] The italic texts are taken from Luce De Lire Instagram post of 26 January, 2026.

Joker knows only the play of signifiers. While Batman maintains a "real identity" (whichever of the two that may be), the Joker sacrifices the "real person" for the character, dissolving in the representation of himself. But who decides that Joker is a villain and Batman a hero? It is the social contract: *while the former lives the problematicity of representation* a*nd embraces the unappropriability of "personal" experience, the Batman remains in touch with these institutional realities. More generally speaking: those who do not obey the rules, do not submit to the idea of what is "right", remain and have always been heretics—of reason, of religion, of the proper politics. And since the social contract is constantly re-negotiated, today's heretic can be tomorrow's heroine. For better or worse. Learning the theory doesn't teach you politics, does not teach you activism and, frankly, it's not necessarily the task of the theorist to tell individual people how to act or what to do.* If philosophers were politicians, it would be the worst tyranny that one could ever think of. It would go beyond prescriptions on how to act and what to do; there would also be laws on what to think and norms on how to judge, what to like and dislike... Which feels..... familiar.

Paolo Virno speaks of a "non-representative democracy" where each-one, rather than every-one, *ought to become* "the editor" *of one's own theory instead, so as to capture their slice of reality*. Subcomandante Marcos is now Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano. In 2014, the persona known as Marcos "ceased to exist," taking the name of a murdered Zapatista teacher, José Luis Solís López. We can now only attempt at describing an identity that continually shifts: is Marcos a militant? A social rebel? The driving force of no-global movements? An author? Writer? Professor of philosophy? Bourgeois? Is Galeano the spokesperson for the Ejército Zapatista de Liberacion National, active for thirty years in Chiapas, Mexico, where many

indigenous communities have long lacked institutional representation—which means, one could be born and die without any document that reports their existence on Earth... Galeano continually becomes eyes without a face. The choice of wearing a mask protects Marcos from the romanticisation of its image even where it creates an image by its own—a process questioned by the theory, suspected of creating false totalities based on dubious absolutes that only serve to mask or reinforce the making of certain ideologies. Yet, the theory generates images too: the hand that creates a "totality" is the same that can grasp or catch it. It is the voice, clear and disenchanted, that embodies the presence of words—"our word is our weapon"—as bodies without identity. Words have indeed no authors: saying opacity, hearing absence, writing and reading as already acts of listening, the synaesthetic experience of speaking. To speak "without" means simultaneously bearing "within" the status of a "we" in the gap between "them," in place of an "I" that "we" cannot articulate: this is the edge of sociality, of social activism; the political speech of "those" who cannot speak, the activism of those who cannot act. Michel Serres in *The Parasite* writes: "the *fueret* is a children's game in which one child sits in the centre, while the others form a circle around them, hiding an object—the *fueret*—behind their backs. They pass it around so that when a child is asked to show their hands, the object is already in someone else's possession. This object, and its relationship with each member of the group and with the whole, becomes the border, the gap, and the distribution between the I and the We. The We is made by passing the I, by exchanging the I, by occultation of the I."[2] Rather than concealing identity by creating a new one, Galeano's mask is integrated within a mimetic process that accommodates the emergence of a new Joker, a subject in between representations. Here, authorship is not a possession of

[2] M. Serres, *Le Parasite*, Grasset, Paris, 1980

an “I” that speaks, but a medium through which multiple voices become audible, even when unrepresented. The obsession for this political notion of “agency” as a property of the individual subject, or object, becomes a margin of indetermination that characterises each persona as a multitude, in other words, agency is the condition of our embodiment, of our own masks that we play, like characters, at times, like clowns, looking at ourselves while fooling ourselves...“Nor is just one individual embarking here” writes French philosopher Jean Francois Lyotard in *Driftworks*, “or even a collective of individuals, but rather, as in Bosch’s Ship, a collection of fools, each fool being an exaggerated part of the normal subject, libido cathected in such and such a sector of the body.”

“¿Palabra de honor?”—“Palabra de enemigo, porque usted y yo seguimos siendo enemigos.” Translation: “Word of honour?” “Word of an enemy,” said José Arcadio Buendía. “Because “you” and “I” are still enemies.” This is Gabriel Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* when José Arcadio Buendía speaks with Don Apolinar Moscote, the government official who wants to impose political authority on the newly founded autonomous city of Macondo. Representation arrives here too, first as an image before it is law: at first, Moscote’s attempt is in fact symbolic, he orders to paint every house wall of the city in blue, the colour of the Conservatory party; later it becomes explicitly political, when the state supervises the elections outcome before the votes are even casted. Their rivalry is displaced by the marriage of the son of the former, Aureliano Buendia, with the youngest daughter of the latter, Remedios Moscote. Nevertheless, despite their love, their private alliance degenerates into a public conflict. After the state’s electoral fraud, Aureliano Buendia leaves the neutral party, takes the name of Colonel and joins the Liberal revolution. Violence is a release

that bursts, and it comes with acknowledgement: the acknowledgment is the release. The opposition between authority and autonomy becomes increasingly complex throughout the novel, as both the government and the revolution are caught up in a machinery of repetition. Ultimately, the revolution itself becomes identified by the violence it sought to oppose. Colonel Aureliano Buendía fights thirty-two wars and loses them all; the only thing that survives is the title, worn so long it replaces the persona who first put it on. This is a different order than Galeano's mask: not a name that keeps the "I" in circulation, passing hand to hand like Serres's *furet*, but a name that fixes, hardens, becoming the only thing left standing once everything it once meant has burned away. Between these two fates of the name lies a question: not whether you are a Batman or a Joker, a neutral or revolutionary, but whether representation is one way of socially mediating as in Marcos, or if it is the only one, as in Macondo: at what point it stops mediating and starts replacing what it once stood for? Is representation something we pass through, or something that, eventually, passes through us?

Theories then provide images we can choose to embody in our life, but with a remainder: in the political carnival, Surrealism is the social contract. It is in this sense, then, that Odysseus can say: “My name is Nobody”;“My mother, father, and all my friends call me Nobody.”[3] This is the trick that the protagonist of the Odyssey plays on Polyphemus in order not to be identified. As writer Anne Carson says, “to read this poem is to follow Odysseus round and round the many rings of his fictions of self.”[4] There where he disguises, lies, masks his identity is where the representation of

[3] Οὖτις ἐμοί γ’ ὄνομα· Οὖτιν δέ με κικλήσκουσι μήτηρ ἠδὲ πατήρ τε καὶ ἄλλοι πάντες ἑταῖροι in Homer, *Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fagles, Penguin Classics/Viking, 1996, Book 9, vv 360-367

[4] A. Carson, *Hesitation*, 2023

a self-becoming metamorphosis—"Sing me o Muse of Odysseus polutropos", "of many turns"—turns into the complicated loop of the Return and the Origin, and specifically, the return to the origin. Apparently, Odysseus has little interest in honor, in fame and glory, "he" has something that differs from "the others," namely from Achilles, Agamennone and even from Hector; Odysseus, is "modern," he wants to find his way back home to family, memory and land: this is the "nostos"—the nostalgia—the homecoming, the return to the self. And yet, is this really what Odysseus desires? And is waiting for the return what his wife Penelope really hopes for? *This*, Carson continues, *is a lie*. This is the turn that the "I" keeps retracing—as if a (political) identity were a thing once had and now misplaced, waiting to be found in a fantasy of loss or in the relativisation of meanings, rather than oriented, again and again and again, continuously mediated. The Odyssea, whether is fiction or not—this was never important—came to be the descriptive representation of the worldview in Homer's time—which, by the way, was most likely the pseudonym of a group of people—yet, this is because it is only one of the few narratives that have survived the cruel passage of time, while all the rest keeps dissolving. "Every time we square a sheet of paper with a ruler and compas—the daily task of the theorist—we return like Odyssesus to blind Polyphemus, to reduce the world to space. Polyphemus, the image of "illogical thinking", an "unnatural" creature that does not quite know hospitality, is uncivilised, it is the monster. Poly-phemus, an assemblage of "many" and "voices", sees nevertheless by means of a single eye, which also identifies him as a cyclops. Yet, this eye is also the latch that edges humanity by exceeding it, the limit of a difference outside what is mirrored, similar and verisimilar; Franco Farinelli cites this eye in *Geography, An Introduction to Models of the World:* "the burning trunk scorches the perimeter of the eye and fries its roots, (...) every

depth is erased, and all that remains of what was once a globe is a flat expanse."[5] In fact, the burning stake that Odysseus uses to blind Polyphemus and get himself out of troubles also individuates a "great dehor," announces a self-imposed exile that enclosures "Nature" by giving it a name. Likeways, in the daily practice of the theorist, where the coordinates of x and y are created to converge, creating orientation and producing meanings, something of Polyphemus' agony echoes its resulting curse, "The dream of reason produces monsters"[6]..... At the threshold of human possibilities, in the collapse of political identities, where the chiasmic encounter between multitudes simultaneously happens, reality seems to assert its folding, unrepresented and unreadable, or in other words, released from the pretense of being completely deployed, always and continuously represented under the presence of intellectual speculation as a mode of production.[7]

Blinded by Odysseus, berzerk, fooled, traumatized, undone, the cyclops cries out to its kin a deafening lament: "Nobody has blinded me!"; "Nobody has fooled me!"; "Nobody is killing me by trickery, not by force!"[8] ...
Nobody is killing me by trickery, not by force...
Maybe, while reading the theory, *I'll underline that.*

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[5] F. Farinelli, *Geografia. Introduzione ai Modelli del Mondo*, Einaudi, Torino, 2003, pp 4-5
[6] F. Goya, *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*, in plate 43, *Los Caprichos*, Prado Museum, Madrid, 1799
[7] cit. Marina Vishmidt book *Speculation as a Mode of Production: Forms of Value Subjectivity in Art and Capital*, Haymarket Books, Chicago, 2019
[8] Οὖτίς με κτείνει δόλῳ οὐδὲ βίηφιν in Homer, *Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fagles, Penguin Classics/Viking, 1996, Book 9, vv 408